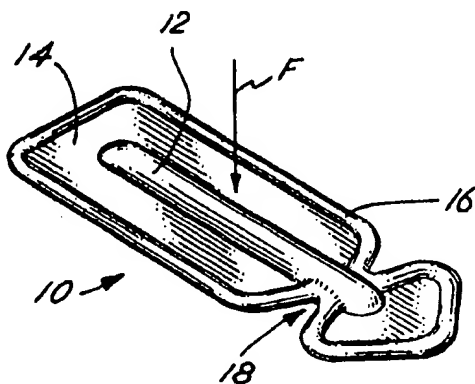




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(54) Title: FRAGRANCE SAMPLE CONTAINER



(57) Abstract

The invention is a fragrance sample container (10) comprised of a central cosmetic-containing portion (12) substantially surrounded by a peripheral portion (14) having thickened edges (16). The entire container (10) is preferably made of soft-gelatin. The thickened edges of the peripheral portion, made of solid gelatin, serve to distribute and absorb the planar force of a weight applied to the container, in order to prevent the central cosmetic-containing portion from rupturing under the pressure of the weight. The invention is particularly useful in the distribution to potential customers of sample unit doses of fragrances or other cosmetics through the mails or in magazines.

FRAGRANCE SAMPLE CONTAINER

BACKGROUND AND SUMMARY OF THE INVENTION

1. Nature of the Invention

The present invention relates to cosmetic product containers. More particularly, the present invention relates to a fragrance sample container for containing and dispensing preferably a unit dosage of cosmetic fragrance in fluid form, while preventing most essentially planar pressures on the container from rupturing the fragrance-holding capsule. Thus, still more particularly, this invention relates to a unit-dose fragrance container that can survive the rigors of shipment through the mails or inclusion in printed material, such as a magazine.

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2. Background of the Invention

It is common practice in the cosmetics industry to mail or otherwise distribute samples of fragrances to potential customers. Channels of distribution may preferably include direct mailing, in-store promotions, or inclusion in demographically appropriate periodicals. Frequently, such samples are distributed in the form of "vial-on-cards", which usually comprise a glass or plastic vial fastened to a cardboard backing. These glass or plastic vials are relatively expensive and are frequently non-biodegradable. Further, these vials are fragile and thereby susceptible to being broken when compressed. Accordingly, vial-on-cards are generally not suitable for mailing or for compression in a stack of magazines.

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More recently, it has become common practice to distribute fragrance samples to potential customers by inserting scent-strips in magazines or mailings. The scent-strip process involves micro-encapsulating a fragrance and adhering it with glue to a printed magazine or mailing insert. While scent strips are easy to mail, are compressible and are relatively inexpensive, they do not present a true rendition of the fragrance to the potential customer.

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- permits distribution via the mails or in magazines or other printed material;
- presents a true rendition of the fragrance;
- is cost effective to manufacture; and
- is biodegradable.

3. Summary of the Invention

Accordingly, the present invention provides a cosmetic sample container useful for containing and dispensing preferably a unit dosage of fluid-form fragrance. In the preferred embodiment, the invention is made of gelatin and comprises a substantially cylindrical narrow central portion, and a peripheral portion with thickened edges. The central portion is a hollow chamber and serves to contain a fluid-form fragrance. The peripheral portion is preferably planar and extends from the central portion. At least two opposing outer edges of the peripheral portion are thickened solid gelatin, and, in the preferred embodiment, are parallel to the central portion. The thickened edges need not be as thick as the central portion. Further, in the preferred embodiment, the overall width of the fragrance sample container is at least three times the width of the central portion. However, the peripheral portion may have a reduced width at a twist-off or neck portion, in order to provide easy access to the contents of the central portion.

The thickened solid edges of the peripheral portion serve to buffer the central fluid-containing portion against the force of a weight applied substantially perpendicular to the plane of the peripheral portion and spread over a plane substantially parallel to the peripheral portion. Thereby, for instance, the thickened edges help to distribute the compressive force of a stack of magazines around the entire cosmetic sample container, rather than allowing the force to solely impact and probably rupture the central fluid-containing portion.

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which point easy access to the central fluid-containing portion is available. However, a variety of other shapes may be used, and the invention is not intended to be limited to a bottle shape.

The cosmetic container 10 may be made from a variety of substances. However, in the preferred embodiment, the container is made of soft gelatin. As described in U.S. Patent No. 5,063,057 (Spellman et al.), "[g]elatin for soft capsules normally will be selected from low-bloom Type A (170-180 g), Type B (150-172 g), or a mixture of Types A and B." (Col. 3, lines 13-16). Generally, a large variety of synthetic polymers may be used as the gelatin substance. "The polymers may either be water-soluble or water-insoluble. Suitable materials are polymers derived from such monomers as vinyl chloride, vinyl alcohol, vinyl pyrrolidone, furan, acrylonitrile, vinyl acetate, methyl acrylate, methyl methacrylate, styrene, vinyl, ethyl ether, vinyl propyl ether, acrylamide, ethylene, propylene, acrylic acid, methacrylic acid, maleic anhydride, salts of any of the aforementioned acids and mixtures thereof. These materials may be in the form of either homo or copolymers. More specific examples include polyvinyl chloride, polypropylene, acrylic/maleic copolymers, sodium polyacrylate, polyvinyl pyrrolidone and polyvinyl alcohol." (*Id.*, col. 3, lines 31-44). In addition, "[c]ellulose based materials may also be suitable; these include sodium carboxymethyl cellulose, hydroxypropyl methyl cellulose, ethyl cellulose, cellulose acetate and cellulose sulphate esters." (*Id.*, col. 3, lines 45-48).

As illustrated by Figures 2 and 6, the central portion 10 is preferably narrow in relation to the overall width W of the container. Most preferably, the overall container is at least three times as wide as the central portion. The central portion may be of a variety of shapes. However, it is preferably of a cylindrical shape, or, alternatively, of an oblong cylindrical shape having an oval-shaped cross section 20 as shown in Figure 6. The vertical thickness V of the central portion should be small enough to permit the container to be inserted in stacked magazines or in mailings, or to meet other given needs.

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the central portion may be permitted to depress slightly under this pressure without bursting.

In an alternative embodiment, the peripheral portion may comprise nothing more than thickened ribs 16 connected in some fashion to the central fluid-containing portion. For instance, the thickened ribs 16 may be attached by spokes to the central portion 12. Other formations may also suffice, as long as the thickened ribs serve the above discussed function of buffering a planar force applied to the fragrance sample container.

10 The fragrance sample container of the present invention may be manufactured by a variety of processes. Preferably, however, the container is formed by the continuous rotary die process illustrated in U.S. Patent No. 1,970,396 to Robert P. Scherer. This process includes heat sealing two gelatin halves together while simultaneously adding the cosmetic contents to the central fluid-containing portion.

While preferred embodiments of the present invention have been depicted and described, it will be appreciated by those skilled in the art that many modifications, substitutions and changes may be made thereto without departing from the true spirit and scope of the invention.

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parallel to said peripheral portion, such that said thickened edges absorb said pressure sufficiently to prevent said pressure from causing said fluid-containing portion to burst.

5. A cosmetic container as in Claim 4 wherein said fluid-containing portion comprises an essentially cylindrical or oblong cylindrical chamber.

6. A cosmetic container as in Claim 4, wherein said peripheral portion further comprises a weakened neck portion for permitting said fluid-containing portion to be opened.

7. A cosmetic container comprising:

10 (a) a fluid-containing portion made of gelatin and having a first vertical thickness;

(b) a substantially planar peripheral portion made of gelatin and surrounding at least a substantial portion of said fluid-containing portion, said peripheral portion having edges, at least a substantial portion of said edges being of a second vertical thickness, such that when a pressure substantially perpendicular to said peripheral portion and spread over a plane substantially parallel to said peripheral portion is applied to said cosmetic container, (i) said fluid-containing portion is sufficiently malleable to depress to a vertical thickness substantially equivalent to or less than said second vertical thickness, while (ii) the edges of said peripheral portion are of a sufficient strength and vertical thickness in relation to said fluid-containing portion to absorb said pressure and to thereby prevent said pressure from causing said fluid-containing portion to burst.

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8. A cosmetic container as in Claim 7 wherein said fluid-containing portion comprises an essentially cylindrical or oblong cylindrical chamber.

SUBSTITUTE SHEET (RULE 26)

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14. A fragrance sample container as in Claim 13 wherein said thickened edges are parallel to said central portion.

15. A fragrance sample container as in Claim 13 wherein said peripheral portion is of a reduced width at an intermediate position in order to provide a neck portion to ease access to the fragrance contained in said central portion.

16. A fragrance sample container as in Claim 13 wherein said central portion is substantially narrow in relation to said peripheral portion.

10 17. A fragrance sample container as in Claim 13 wherein said central portion is substantially cylindrical or oblong cylindrical.

SUBSTITUTE SHEET (RULE 26)

A. CLASSIFICATION OF SUBJECT MATTER IPC 5 A45D37/00 B65D75/48 A61J1/06		
According to International Patent Classification (IPC) or to both national classification and IPC		
B. FIELDS SEARCHED		
Minimum documentation searched (classification system followed by classification symbols) IPC 5 A45D B65D A61J		
Documentation searched other than minimum documentation to the extent that such documents are included in the fields searched		
Electronic data base consulted during the international search (name of data base and, where practical, search terms used)		
C. DOCUMENTS CONSIDERED TO BE RELEVANT		
Category *	Citation of document, with indication, where appropriate, of the relevant passages	Relevant to claim No.
X	US,A,5 063 057 (SPELLMAN ET AL.) 5 November 1991 cited in the application	7
Y	see column 2, line 50 - column 3, line 30; figures 1-6	1-6,8-17
Y	--- US,A,3 689 458 (HELLSTROM) 5 September 1972 see column 3, line 72 - column 7, line 10; figures 1-8	1-6,8-17
X	--- DE,A,22 00 310 (INDUSTRIE-WERKE KARLSRUHE AUGSBURG) 12 July 1973 see page 6, paragraph 1 -last paragraph; figures 1-3	1,4,7, 10,13
	--- -/--	
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Further documents are listed in the continuation of box C. <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Patent family members are listed in annex.		
* Special categories of cited documents : "A" document defining the general state of the art which is not considered to be of particular relevance "E" earlier document but published on or after the international filing date "L" document which may throw doubts on priority claim(s) or which is cited to establish the publication date of another citation or other special reason (as specified) "O" document referring to an oral disclosure, use, exhibition or other means "P" document published prior to the international filing date but later than the priority date claimed "T" later document published after the international filing date or priority date and not in conflict with the application but cited to understand the principle or theory underlying the invention "X" document of particular relevance; the claimed invention cannot be considered novel or cannot be considered to involve an inventive step when the document is taken alone "Y" document of particular relevance; the claimed invention cannot be considered to involve an inventive step when the document is combined with one or more other such documents, such combination being obvious to a person skilled in the art. "&" document member of the same patent family		
Date of the actual completion of the international search 28 April 1994		Date of mailing of the international search report 02. 05. 94
Name and mailing address of the ISA European Patent Office, P.B. 5818 Patentlaan 2 NL - 2280 HV Rijswijk Tel. (+ 31-70) 340-2040, Tx. 31 651 epo nl, Fax (+ 31-70) 340-3016		Authorized officer Williams, M

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